

I. Introduction

- A. Today we're going to mash up a couple of places in Scripture. Our main thinking will be based the Book of Acts.
- B. But let's start here:
 - 1. *"Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? And what communion has light with darkness? And what accord has Christ with Belial? Or what part has a believer with an unbeliever?" (2 Corinthians 6:14-15)*
- C. We are witnessing what happens in a country when you have groups with irreconcilable differences, and you try to keep them together. It doesn't work. There is no place for compromise, no place for concession, and no place for cooperation. The darkness and the light simply cannot coexist.
- D. That is reality.
- E. But that reality doesn't stop the darkness from trying.

II. Our Turn

- A. My message today is part 8 in our journey through this book of Acts. The series is called Our Turn. God began to work in the world in powerful ways through the Church... that amazing gift to the world that God establishes in the book of Acts.
- B. God began his work through the church, and now it's our turn to keep it going.
- C. I invite you to think with me today on the topic, It's Our Turn to **Choose Sides**.

III. The Demon Possessed Woman

- A. *Now it happened, as we went to prayer, that a certain slave girl possessed with a spirit of divination met us, who brought her masters much profit by fortune-telling. (Acts 16:16)*
 - 1. Here you have a team of Christian leaders, bringing the gospel to a city in Europe. That city is Philippi and those leaders are Paul, Silas, Timothy, Luke, and a couple others. They are going to a prayer meeting, a prayer gathering.
 - 2. And here comes a demon dominated young woman. Luke, who writes these words, says, "she met us."
 - a) You should know that when the people of God set themselves to prayer, the enemy of our souls sets himself to opposition.
 - 3. There's a lot here to talk about. But let's start with the fact of demons.
 - a) As Christians, we believe this universe contains far more than meets the eye. There is not only the natural realm, but there is a supernatural realm as well. In that supernatural realm, you will find God and the devil, angels and demons, heaven and hell, truth and deception.
 - b) The supernatural realm is far greater and stronger than the natural realm. It is eternal, whereas the material realm is only temporal. (2 Cor. 4:18)
 - c) The Bible teaches there are spiritual beings, created by God and therefore less than God, called angels and demons.
 - d) The chief of these beings was named Lucifer. Through Pride, he fell, and became Satan, the Adversary. Satan, and the angels who fell with him, are now the great adversary against God. The Bible calls those fallen angels "demons."
 - e) All of human history, and even cosmic history, has been caught in the crossfire between God and Satan.
 - 4. I want to be very fast to point out that God is infinite and uncreated, and Satan is finite and created. Satan is no match for God. He never will be. His doom is certain, and the victory of God, through Jesus Christ, is absolutely guaranteed. In fact, it's already won.
 - a) We don't fight for victory, we fight from victory, and our lives are to be lived in victory.
 - b) But none of that stops Satan and his demons from trying to devastate the human race.
 - 5. So here comes Paul and his team, there in Philippi, just heading down to a prayer meeting.
 - 6. Along the way, he is met by this girl, a young woman. He has a spirit of divination (fortune-telling), and is demon possessed.
 - a) The Greek text literally says, she had "a spirit, a Python." Yes, python, like the snake.
 - b) In pagan mythology, there was a god that protected the famous oracle at Delphi. That god was named Python. Eventually, the Python spirit was used for anyone who, under the spirit's power, could tell fortunes, read minds, or "read people's mail." It gets even weirder. This term was also used for a ventriloquist.
 - c) That's because the idea was that the spirit would take over the body and speak in another voice through the demon possessed person. She was nothing but a mouth through which the demon spoke.
 - d) In the Old Testament, this kind of language is used about what were called "familiar spirits." Everything about this is forbidden and out of bounds for the people of God.
 - 7. For this girl, her whole life is a story of bondage. Enslavement. Imprisonment. She was a total victim of the devil's game plan of shattering human dominion. This girl has three strikes against her:
 - a) She is in bondage to a demon, called the python spirit. She is in bondage to her handlers, as she is called a slave of these men who are making money off of her. They have made her a traveling fortune teller, even though they can see that she's suffering. She is in bondage to sin, since she doesn't yet know Jesus as her Savior and Deliverer.
 - 8. All bondage, all addiction, all entrapment is at its core, a shattering of your God-given dominion.
 - a) You're not in charge. You're not free. You're not the boss of you. You're not running your life... some other force, power, master is running your life. You are not rising up to your God-given dominion. That's been broken. That's been shattered. This is the devil's game, the devil's goal, the devil's grand design.
 - 9. This poor girl is suffering a triple whammy.
- B. *This girl followed Paul and us, and cried out, saying, "These men are the servants of the Most High God, who proclaim to us the way of salvation." And this she did for many days. (Acts 16:17,18a)*
 - 1. This is so strange. There's the demon-afflicted girl doing PR (public relations) for the Gospel Missionaries. She's speaking the truth. She's actually speaking in support of Paul's mission. She's rallying the community to him.

2. Why on earth would demons conscript this girl's vocal cords and actually speak truth through her?
3. And not only truth, but the most important truth in the world? There is a God Most High, there is a way of salvation, and these men can tell you that way.
 - a) **Lesson 1 — Satan is a recruiter.**
4. As colleges recruit students, as sports teams recruit athletes, as the military recruits warriors... so the devil recruits humans.
5. Satan is a recruiter. He has a school. The devil is the president and professor of own university of life. It is called the University of World, the cosmos diabolicus.
6. The most popular professor of theology in the world is Dr. Satan. The whole world is enrolled in his school... Infernal U.
7. **INFERNAL U**
 - a) **HIS CURRICULUM: Unreality.**
 - (1) *"Now the Spirit expressly says that in latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons, speaking lies in hypocrisy..." (1 Timothy 4:1-2)*
 - b) **HIS REACH: The World System (academia, media, arts, entertainment, government, everything)**
 - (1) *"We know that we are of God, and the whole world [kosmos = world system] lies under the sway of the wicked one." (1 John 5:19)*
 - c) **HIS MASK: Righteousness (false)**
 - (1) *"And no wonder! For Satan himself transforms himself into an angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also transform themselves into ministers of righteousness, whose end will be according to their works." (2 Corinthians 11:14-15)*
 - d) **HIS METHOD: Infiltration**
 - (1) *"For certain men have crept in unnoticed, who long ago were marked out for this condemnation, ungodly men, who turn the grace of our God into lewdness and deny the only Lord God and our Lord Jesus Christ." (Jude 1:4)*
 - e) **HIS DIIMPOL: Shattered Dominion**
 - (1) *"For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ: whose end is destruction, whose god is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame—who set their mind on earthly things." (Philippians 3:18-19)*
8. Welcome to Infernal U, the biggest brainwashing operation in global history.
9. Every single piece of whatever philosophy guides your life has been spit on by the devil.
 - a) Each one needs careful evaluation. Careful investigation.
 - b) Each one needs to be run through the grid of Scripture.
10. Because even in the most simple philosophies of life the devil is recruiting you. He is a ConMan. He has mastered the art of hiding behind words and ideas and philosophies and methodologies to suck people into his system.
11. This is why the Bible is so insistent that the people of God be alert, aware, on guard, and armed for the fight.
 - a) If he has to cloak his lies in Bible verses he'll do it. If he has to cloak his lies in truth he'll do it. If he has to cloak his lies in what sounds loving and compassionate and kind he'll do it.
12. He is the ultimate con man.
 - a) He quoted Bible verses to Jesus. (Matthew 4:1-11)
 - b) He twisted the heart of Saint Peter to discourage Jesus from the cross. (Mark 8:33)
 - c) And he got the whole thing rolling by quoting the very words of God himself in the garden of Eden to Eve. But he added his own twist. (Gen 3:1-3)
 - (1) He always adds his own twist, but you'll never see it coming.
13. Ever since God gave Adam and Eve dominion in the garden of Eden Satan has been seething with envy. (Isaiah 14:12-15)
 - a) He wanted that dominion. He wanted that domain. He wanted that power.
14. And ever since then, he has been working overtime to shatter human dominion in every way he can.
 - a) He promises love and delivers hatred. He promises life but delivers death. He promises freedom but shackles your heart. He promises pleasure but delivers pain. He promises joy but delivers sorrow. He promises his own version of God's abundant life, but only gives heartbreak and regret and carnage and tears.
 - (1) Who in their right mind would enroll in that school?
15. Even so, Satan is a recruiter. He will say absolutely anything to recruit students. Even to you, he will call out to you, he will send messages to you, whatever will appeal to you, impress you, allure you, make you nod your head... Nobody knows how to bait a hook like the devil.
16. So when this poor girl, devastated by a demon, comes upon the greatest missionary team of all time... the demon takes over her vocal cords and sucks in the crowds by shouting the TRUTH:
 - a) "These men are the servants of the Most High God, who proclaim to us the way of salvation."
17. She does this day after day after day. Over and over. Look at what happens.
- C. *But Paul, greatly annoyed [troubled], turned and said to the spirit, "I command you in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her." And he came out that very hour." (Acts 16:18)*
 1. Paul commands the evil spirit to leave her and it does. He commands the demon to leave her in the name of Jesus Christ. Paul does that because everything he does, and everything we do, for God, is done by the authority of Jesus Christ and by the power of Jesus Christ.
 2. God never calls humans to get into a tug of war with the devil in our own human strength.
 3. But he does call us to find strength in the victory Jesus already won.

4. **Lesson 2 — in his Cross, Resurrection, and Ascension, Jesus Christ has already won a total victory over Satan and all his demons.**
 - a) *“Having disarmed principalities and powers, He made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them in it.” (Colossians 2:15)*
 - b) *“But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.” (1 Corinthians 15:57)*
 - c) *“And the God of peace will crush Satan under your feet shortly. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. Amen.” (Romans 16:20)*
 - d) *“Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.” (Ephesians 6:11)*
 - e) *“Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us.” (Romans 8:37)*
5. When Paul cast out that demon, he was squarely set on the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ.
 - a) It is his victory. His power. His authority. His glory. His truth. His Word that overcomes the wicked one and puts him to open shame. Yes, there is victory in Jesus.
6. And here is the big thing that most Christians just don’t get:
 - a) **Lesson 3 — The victory of your position in Christ does not give you clearance to let down your guard.**
 - (1) You still have to be sober. You still have to be vigilant. You still have to resist the devil. You still have to take up the armor of God... Which will be my next sermon series coming this fall... The Christian in Complete Armor.
 - b) Why? Because...
7. **Lesson 4 — Even if you don’t have demons that need casting out, you still have false conclusions, confused opinions, and untrue belief systems you need to cast out from your mind, so that you can recover your dominion and reign in life.**
 - a) *“For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ,” (2 Corinthians 10:4-5)*
8. In the deepest sense, the war was over when Jesus rose from the dead and sat down at the right hand of God. That was D-Day for Satan. That was the triumph of the Crucified One. The War has been one. Victory achieved.
9. But the mop up battles continues every single day.
10. So here is this poor woman, a girl really, beaten down and utterly defeated by the powers of darkness. A mouthpiece for a demon, and another victim in the angelic conflict.
 - a) And in one command in the name of Jesus, she is set free. Her shackles were broken. Her soul was free.
 - b) Her dominion in the spiritual real was restored.
11. But, her handlers, her masters are furious at this, because she can no longer make money for them.
 - a) Think about the parallels here.
 - b) This is human-trafficking, on such a deep level, and it’s so evil, it’s utterly heartbreaking to think of.
12. But I want you to notice something.
13. This demonized girl was *promoting* the mission of Paul and the team. She wasn’t hurting them, she was helping them.
 - a) What an incredibly strange thing we have here! We have the devil preaching the gospel. We have the devil confirming the true Word of those who preached it. How is it that the Prince of Darkness could support the missionaries who are actually laboring to destroy his kingdom? Was this the Devil’s mistake?
14. No. This whole thing is a master stroke of satanic subtlety.
 - a) He spoke the truth to defeat the truth. He spoke the truth to put Paul and Silas and the demon possessed woman on the same level, as if they all agreed. If the people of the community began to think for one moment that this demon possessed girl was preaching the same message as Paul, the devil would have won a major victory.
- (1) **Lesson 5 — The devil confessing Christ is more dangerous than the devil denying Christ.**
15. Watch out.
16. The devil will make good things come from an evil source so that you will begin to trust the evil source. The devil will say true things from a deceptive source so that you will begin to trust the deceptive source.
 - a) And a minute later, that same mouth that spoke a truth will shout a lie... and the devil will have sprung his trap.
17. The devil can be allowed have zero part in any Christian ministry that has an ounce of integrity. He cannot be allowed to get a foot in the door.
 - a) Christ never wants publicity from Satan.
18. On a human level, imagine what Paul could have done with help from this girl. He could have used the help! Paul wanted crowds of people to hear the gospel, and if this girl had a superpower, it was in drawing a crowd. Today, she would be called an Influencer.
 - a) But you have none of this in Paul.
19. God will never make an alliance with Satan, not even for a minute.
20. All these media personalities, and all these celebrities, and all these politicians, and all these ministers, and officials, and bureaucrats, and people who want a piece of you...
 - a) They quote Jesus, but out of context. They bring up Scriptures, but only to impress their hearers. They refer to God, but they’re taking his name in vain. They cite the Golden Rule, but only to further their agenda. They mention the Sermon on the Mount, because it suits their secular purposes. They quote one of the Ten Commandments even as they spit on the other nine. Don’t be fooled. God doesn’t need them. Their truth is the bait on a very nasty hook. Wake up.
 - (a) There’s a battle for your soul. Choose well.

D. Choose sides

1. **Lesson 6 — It’s time to choose sides.**

2. I wish I could have been there when fire blasted down from heaven and torched a dripping wet sacrifice in a massive conflagration. I mean I think I wish I could have been there. I'm not so sure.
3. This was the famous standoff between Elijah and the priests of a demonic deity called Baal. God's own people had been seduced into the cult of Baal.
 - a) The same people for whom the invisible God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob parted the sea... collapsed the walls of Jericho... brought manna in the wilderness... led them with smoke by day and a fire by night... the same people whose mighty God gave them houses they did not build and vineyards they did not plant... the people whose God led them to a land flowing with milk and honey...
 - b) Those same people were not bringing their sacrifices to an child-eating idol with the head of a bull, and temple prostitutes, and barbarities too despicable to mention.
4. And here comes that gritty, crusty prophet of God named Elijah.
 - a) *And Elijah came to all the people, and said, "How long will you falter between two opinions? If the LORD is God, follow Him; but if Baal, follow him." (1 Kings 18:21)*
5. It's time to choose sides, he was saying.
6. And a minute later, the one true God, the only God, the maker of heaven and earth God, the Redeemer and Savior God, the God and Father of Our Lord Jesus Christ... that God... Our God blasted down a bolt of fire from heaven to consume the sacrifice Elijah had prepared. Choose. Sides.
7. Get off the fence.
 - a) If Jesus Christ is God, follow him. If Baal is God... or money, sex, or power, or kids, or fame, or comfort, or any other idol is your god... follow it. Quit faltering between two opinions. Be done with that.
8. Jesus said, I wish you were hot, or I wish you were cold... but this lukewarm thing you've become, I spit you out of my mouth (Rev 3:16). You cannot put the two together and call it good.
9. Paul wouldn't mix the voice of a demon with the voice of God. He knew the two wouldn't mix. He would later write,
 - a) *"Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? And what communion has light with darkness? And what accord has Christ with Belial? Or what part has a believer with an unbeliever?" (2 Corinthians 6:14-15)*
10. These are incompatible forces. These are irreconcilable differences. They are opposites and they cancel out each other.
11. And when a soul tries to cling to opposites, you invite into your soul contradictions, and absurdities, and needless drama, and brokenness, and heartaches, and pains, and insanities that a soul can't bear.
 - a) I always want to be careful when I bring up the mental and emotional struggles almost everyone today is having — these are complex issues involving the whole person, body, soul, and spirit.
 - b) But I have to say that so many (not all) of those struggles in believers' lives today are the consequence of a vain attempt to hold together righteousness with lawlessness, light with darkness, Christ and the devil... these pairings are impossible and will blow apart whatever vessel tries to contain them both.
 - c) You're going to fracture your spirit.
12. It is exhausting to falter between two irreconcilable opinions. So choose sides. Will you be all in for Jesus Christ? Or still on the fence? Will you be seven days a week for Jesus Christ? Or just a Sunday Christian?
13. What are you letting in the door of your heart that needs to be shut out? Who are letting in the door that needs to be shut out.

IV. Victory

- A. Right now, choose sides. Paul said,
 1. "I command you in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her." And he came out that very hour." (Acts 16:18)
- B. Not, I'll think about it. Not, let me get back to you about that.
- C. But right now. This very hour.
- D. God brought you here today for to make this choice. God overcame your resistance to you coming to church today for this... very... hour. So that you would say to whatever darkness is holding you down, I command you to come out of me in the name of Jesus Christ. This very hour I choose sides this very hour I choose Jesus Christ and to be all in for him.
- E. C.T. Studd...
 1. **"Christ's call is to save the lost, not the stiff-necked; He came not to call scoffers but sinners to repentance; not to build and furnish comfortable chapels, churches, and cathedrals at home in which to rock Christian professors to sleep by means of clever essays, stereotyped prayers, and artistic musical performances, but to capture men from the devil's clutches and the very jaws of Hell. This can be accomplished only by a red-hot, unconventional, unfettered devotion, in the power of the Holy Spirit, to the Lord Jesus Christ."**
 - a) **Two little lines I heard one day,
Traveling along life's busy way;
Bringing conviction to my heart,
And from my mind would not depart;
Only one life, 'twill soon be past,
Only what's done for Christ will last.**
- F. Young men, stepping up into the world, I'm talking to you. Choose sides for Jesus today.
- G. Young women, making your way in these harsh days, I'm talking to you. Choose sides for Jesus.
- H. All ages, all stages, women, and men... only one life, twill soon be past. Only what's done for Christ will last.
- I. Choose. Sides.